

Title: Interview with Andre Collins

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Interviewer(s): Joseph Grenagle and Ty Keaton

Interviewee: Andre Collins

Introduction: Andre Collins talks about growing up in Crisfield before moving out and doing a career in basketball, and then coming back to open up a shoe store for a while in Crisfield. He talks about how things have changed, in both the culture, people and the town itself over the years while also remaining hopeful that a new generation of people can help restore Crisfield to a bustling town again.

[Transcription begins]

Joseph Grenagle (Grenagle): Alright, today is April 16th. We are at Washington High School with Andre Collins. My name is Joseph Grenagle and with us is...

Ty Keaton (Keaton): Ty Keaton.

Grenagle: And we are going to ask Andre a couple of questions on his experiences in Crisfield. So first question for you, Andre, how long of you who lived in Crisfield, were you born there or moved there?

Andre Collins (Collins): Yeah, so I was born and raised in Crisfield. Majority of all of my family basically was born in, lived in that area in Crisfield and some moved away. I-.

[Radio interruption starts at 00:00:40, interview resumes at 00:00:43]

Collins: I was fortunate enough to be pretty good in basketball, and I moved away. I was in Europe for 10 and a half years playing professional basketball. I left Crisfield when I was 17 to pursue my basketball career and retired about 10 years ago. I currently live in Salisbury, but I'm very active in the Crisfield community.

Grenagle: Gotcha. And what drove you to move to Salisbury after you had returned and not back to Crisfield?

Collins: Honestly, I would say I think the pace of the town, you know, being able at a young age at 17, **getting the leave out** of Crisfield and experiencing, you know, bigger cities and faster pace things, you know, moving to Europe and experiencing, you know, all of that, although some cities in Italy. So, I was in Italy for eight and a half years and some cities in Europe reminds me a lot of Crisfield, just the size of the city, the community, you know. Everybody knows everybody, you know, but I think for me I'd never actually wanted to move back to the Eastern Shore. I moved back to be closer to my kids and me at the time my ex-wife, we decided to buy a home in Salisbury because it was more, I guess that was more the central location on the Eastern Shore and it was- it had more of a city vibe, more of a fast paced, more things to do. You know, rather than if I live in Crisfield, I would have to drive 45 minutes or an hour to go to the mall or to go to Wal-Mart or, you know, honestly, it was probably just being able to experience more things. I think Crisfield has its pros and its cons.

[Radio interruption starts at 00:02:40, interview resumes at 00:02:45]

Collins: The slow pace for me would be the con. You know, the pros are some of the things I talked about. Like, just having a, you know, knowing everyone, you know, just a tight-knit community, you know. So, yeah that's- that's right about it.

Keaton: Would you say that over your childhood in Crisfield, you saw things slow down more than- than it is now, or was it more fast-paced then? Like when you were younger, did it- did you see a gradual slowdown, or is it slow?

Collins: So it breaks my heart every time I go into Crisfield, because it's not the place that it was when I grew up. You know, growing up, Crisfield was- was a booming city, like booming town, you know. Seafood industry was still strong. A lot of people were coming to Crisfield, you know, rather it be for seafood, rather it be our views, rather be for entertainment. You know, Crisfield was a very popular and buzzing town during my time growing up. Now when I come home, when I go to Crisfield, you know, it really is- is kind of sad, and it never feels like home until someone passes away, you know, and that's because everyone that you grew up with comes home during that time, and, you know, you're- you're kind of like hanging out in your neighborhood the same way you used to when you were younger. You know, you see people that, even the people that you looked up to when you were growing up. So, when I look at it now, it's- it's honestly nothing like it was when I was growing up, you know. Like I said, it was a community where, you know, you could walk anywhere. There weren't any murders or no violence, you know, we fought a lot, but I feel like they do that everywhere, you know, but the community raised, you know, we raised each other. You know, I got, if I did something to get in trouble, like me and my friends and I was on the other side of town, I probably got in trouble and corrected five or six times before I got home, you know, and nowadays it's not like that. You know when you go down there, I go home and I'll go in the community I grew up in over there in

Somers Cove in the housing authority, half of the people I- I don't recognize, I don't know anymore, you know, so it's a completely different climate and culture down there now.

Grenagle: Just kind of as you're in like a thought space of how it used to be, do you have any like childhood memories that like really resonate with you still these days, positive or negative that?

Collins: Childhood memories. Not sure, I mean just I guess just- just being able to freely walk around, you know, and you know, the climate and environment down there you had several stores, you know, like corner and convenience stores that was open, several restaurants. I remember restaurants like I'm- I'm a big crab eater like I love crabs. I mean, I was trying to figure out ways to get them shipped to Europe when I was over there, but I remember there was a restaurant called Side Street and it kind of goes to say of how- how popular Crisfield was and how booming the town was. I remember people used to come from out of town and go to this restaurant so it was an all-you-can-eat crab place and it was right downtown which my culture and where I grew up, you know, the African Americans, we called it downtown, but most of white people in Crisfield, they call it downtown, uptown. We call uptown Moore Main Street, near City Hall and you know, near all of that, but you know, I remember downtown it would be, I'm talking lines, like wrapped around, you guys, I'm not sure. Have y'all visited It Takes a Village?

Grenagle: So, no, last, I was down there a couple weeks ago, It Takes a Village, it looked like it was closed. It looked like they had a sign for up for lease on one corner and for development from years ago on the other corner.

Collins: Well, so you know where the- the- but you know, where the building is.

Grenagle: Vaguely, right off the highway.

Collins: Right near Captain's- Captain's Carry Out, right? So that, the place I'm talking about is next to Captain's Carry Out, and it has like a upstairs to it. So that building would be packed. That was all you can eat seafood place and it would be, I'm talking the line would be people on the steps wrapped all the way down in front of where It Takes a Village is.

Grenagle: Is that Watermen's Inn?

Collins: Down. Yep, all the way, it would be down near Waterman Inn. So, the- the restaurant isn't Watermen's Inn. The restaurant was called Side Street and it was right next to Captain's Carry Out. So that was, you know, one of my memories just being able to freely, as a kid, you know, freely walk around the city of Crisfield safe, no worries, sitting in barbershops, you know. Sitting with Mr. Vernell and Mr. Harlan, kinda we call it getting game, you know, getting mentored basically. Even, you know, even I pay a lot of homage to people in my neighborhood

that I grew up, you know, around and I feel like help protect me. I think even from a standpoint of people who are involved, like who are in the streets, I was one that was protected, you know. Like nowadays I feel like, nowadays I feel like this is going on all across America. I feel there are no big homies anymore, no OGs, you know. They're kind of recruiting kids to- to be in the streets versus, you know, that big brother like, no don't follow this trend that I'm doing, or you know, go to school, get your grades, you know, pursue your basketball career or, you know, rather maybe just from- from a just a family part of Crisfield. If- if I can speak on one thing that would be, you know, it like the childhood memories, just the family part of- of Crisfield, like I said I will be corrected seven six to seven times before I got home and then my mom would know exactly what happened by the time I got home, you know, you're just a community raised the community.

Keaton: Would you say that the environment, the land, weather, water is the main driving force for people leaving?

Collins: I think it is definitely one of the main forces. I think, you know, it's hard like getting flooded in all the time. You know, I know in the summer times when I would come home in my off-season, I used to have one of the condos downtown and, you know, I want to say it was Sandy that was real bad and the flood, you know, it was, I mean, it's covering buildings and, you know, I owned a store, a sneaker store down there a couple years ago, and was affected by that, flooded out. So I do think that it plays a major part, but I also feel like the lack of jobs and, you know, it's- it's- it's poverty, you know. It's not much opportunity down there. As well as, you know, people are with, I think with the internet and the way things are kind of evolving, people are realizing that there's a bigger world out there and, you know, you can explore a lot of different things, you know, and I think people are ambitious now with the internet and with TikTok and, you know, all of that type of stuff. And Crisfield is kind of, at least from my perspective and where I grew up, you know, the way I saw Crisfield, Crisfield is kind like a trap to the neighborhood I grew in, you know. If you ask somebody on the other side of town, then they may have a different perspective. They see Crisfield from the water, you know, they see Crisfield in a nice big home, it's quiet, it you know, they- they have jobs already set up for them when they're coming out of school. Graduating high school, you know, their parents might own a seafood company or own a company down there, you know, so I think the people that grow up and struggle and, you know, don't have much opportunity, you know. The moment they seek opportunity and the moment that they realize that it's a bigger world out here, I think that's- along with the flood and, you know, just it's always flooding and that stuff. I think that plays a major part in why people are leaving town.

Grenagle: So I think I remember seeing on a website that had to deal with Crisfield like flood mitigation. There was a video and it may have had you involved in that. It was a video clip of just like after a flood event had happened and you were having to like squeegee the water out and throw blowers fans in there afterwards. And so, like as a- as a business owner down there, can

you kind of speak on like how that environment, how like how did you prepare or like react to it and- and ultimately was that why you don't have the business down there at this point or?

Collins: Yeah, so we probability, we lost about, I want to say maybe, it was around 10 to, in between 10 to 15 thousand dollars' worth of merchandise. Now we, and on top of that, we couldn't get flood insurance because of the location of where we were and it was a known area to flood. You know, so that was tough. You know, because one day, you know, you're operating, and then the next day you are in there, you know, trying to get the water out and wringing out merchandise and actually taking out the entire store to figure out what could be salvaged and putting it back or, you know. So that was a lot. But I would say it's not necessarily the reason why we decided to stop the business down there. We actually ended up moving the location after that happened. We moved up towards in the Food Lion, in the plaza over there in Food Lion. So we were right next door to China- to China Wok, to the Chinese restaurant. And I would say we stopped because we realized that it was costing us more money to stay open than we were actually making. Do profit because even still, you know, we try to provide a service to the town, something that wasn't down there. So we had a sneaker store and we were basically selling like retro Jordans and, you know, just how you resell them and all that good stuff. And we realized that it's also a closed mentality in Crisfield, you know, and Somerset County and honestly, if I'm speaking on the Eastern Shore. To where it's almost like a feeling that no one like people don't want to see someone else doing better than what the next person is doing and I'm a well-known person for what I've done with the game of basketball and, you know, a lot of I don't necessarily talk about like, what I make or what I had or you know stuff like that, but the perception of athlete is what you're, you know, you're a multi-millionaire or you're rich, right, so we got some support but we weren't getting a ton of support and the type of support that we were getting, it wasn't on a pace fast enough to sustain like down there and I also think it, you know, not only like not only the cannot chop it up to closed minds, but I also think because of where we were and the poverty, you know, the job, the lack of jobs. People aren't working, so people also couldn't afford, you know, we're reselling sneakers. You know, if we have a release that come out today, we get that release and immediately, once we buy them, you know, we're going to put another \$50 on top or \$30 on top, depending on how popular the shoe is. Sometimes it could be another \$100, you know. It's all about the demand of the sneaker, and you have some people who could, but again, you- you know, you just don't the enough people that could afford, you know, that that business so.

Keaton: So, you talked about repairing your store from floods using the fans. Can you think of any, how common was something like that? Whether it was in your own home, other stores like that. How- how common did you see any type of flooding and had to a repair like that?

Collins: I think it's gotten worse over the years. When I was growing up, though, we've always dealt with some level of flooding. You know, but the type of, I feel like the flooding that we're seeing now is, you see it on the streets now that you didn't necessarily see it when I was growing

up. You know, like now it rains, it's- it's flooded. Just last weekend, you know, I was driving down and then you know, it rained the same as hard here in Princess Anne. It's raining hard in Salisbury. I get to Crisfield, and I mean, it's water everywhere. You know? I don't think it necessarily flooded on a regular like that when it rained when I was growing up. Like, the street my mom lives on is going the same time that the store flooded. I remember we left the store, went to my mom's. And, you know, we did things like pick up the extension cords and pick, you know, just get stuff out of the floor to a level that we at least thought that the water was not going to come up to. But by that evening, I went to my mom's house and by that evening water had reached up to her- her steps, you know, to the top of her steps. And on that street, which is Locust Street, it usually never flooded. You know, so you see these things and- and you see, like, it's more areas and more streets down there are flooding than when I was growing up.

Grenagle: And do you see, like, location of, like the housing authority homes? Does that seem to be like a more critical area within like the flooding, than anywhere else?

Collins: So, I think it depends on which- which side of the housing authority. So, I think the ones closer the house, the part of the house authority is closer to the Marina. There's this one street that, I don't know if you know where Big Willie's is. Yes, the store. So that street. So Big Willie's is on this corner. And then you have apartments here. So that's street, which is Broadway, I believe. That street is flooding more- more frequent than, you know, it used to. Cove Street is flooding more, which I always think, I think Cove Street always flooded, but I think now it's flooding a little bit more. So, the other side where the basketball courts are, I've never seen it flood over there. Besides, you know, besides when Sandy hit, you know, when Sandy hit the entire town, you know, was flooded. I will say the main strip, you know, it seems to be creeping. It seems to flooding a little bit more further up than what it used to. You know, the street where, I can't think of the name of that street, but the street where the McDonald's is on, you know, that street is flooding more that than it used to. You know? And I'm not sure if it's when there's like a bad storm versus when there is high tide or when, you know, when it's raining. But I- I do know that if we get a mixture of rain and a high tide, that street on Broadway is going to flood. And the street on Cove Street is gonna, you know, is gonna flood. But again, the street that's over, I mean, the apartments that are near where the basketball courts are, it- it usually don't- doesn't flood over there.

Keaton: Can you speak on how the local government, city, or county, or even the state has tried to help, or if anything, that they do help?

Collins: I know I've seen and heard that they've, they've done little things, you know, I can't necessarily speak on what exactly they've been doing. I do know that I've seen them, I've been down and seen them working on like pipes and tunnels and stuff like that. A lot of stuff is he say, you know, can be he say she say, you know, like barbershop talk or stuff like that, you know. I know that, like, I was told that part of the problem is what Crisfield is working on a system that

was kind of created a very long time ago. And that system had needed attention for a long time, and it basically was just kind of putting band-aids over and not actually fixing the system. So again, that's above, like me, I kind of just have been around conversations, talk about it, because every time there's a flood or every time that there's bad storm, you know, that conversation comes up.

Grenagle: And so, about you and your role with Crisfield, can you speak about that? So, Jen Merritt, as she shared your information, your role was that you are engaged with the housing authorities. Can you kind of speak on that?

Collins: So yeah, so I, so there's a couple things like, yeah, I'm engaged with the house authority as the Community Center Director. The Community Center has been closed since Sandy and I think Sandy happened like October of 2012, I think, or something like that, I want to say September, October 2012, and, so it's been 13 years since that building has been open. I've been employed there for the last five and haven't been able to open the community center one time. So, I do a lot of things, create programs and do different events to build the morale in the community. You know, I do a lot of community work with kids. I'm kind of mentoring kids, use my, I guess, knowledge in basketball to do stuff for kids. You know, just trying to fill a need and be a voice or a mentor or, you know, I'm going to play the role in helping refurbish the basketball courts that were over there. They were pretty bad for a long time, and over the last, I think, I want to say, they've been finished for about two years now. So, honestly, I just I feel a responsibility, not just in Crisfield, to give back to the youth, you know, just because of the things that I've done and I understand what I've done on the from the Eastern Shore is pretty rare. You know, in the city, having a professional athlete is, I mean, you go to Baltimore or D.C. or somewhere like that is, you know, you're probably going to have one every year. Where we're from is probably every 15 or so years, you know, every 20 years or, you know, you'd be lucky if it's every 10. You know, so I just try to, especially in Crisfield, because that's where I'm from, I just to, you know, do my part of giving back to the youth and or to the community.

Grenagle: So, the Community Center has been closed since Sandy, would you say that, or would Sandy have been the cause of that closing?

Collins: Yeah, so Sandy not because I'm sorry to cut you off but Sandy from what I was told sent and- and this is from my supervisor at the time which was down there. So, water from Sandy had first of all the Community Center was apparently built wrong, so it's built on a hill and they're saying it should've never been built there. You probably would say, you know, what that makes sense because the side of it, it's kind of like- like the gym is very small and it can't- you can't expand on it because of the hill, but nonetheless it was built on a hill and when Sandy hit water, you know, from the flood got under- seeped under the building so after some time the water the ground was soft and the building started to shift. So- so just recently, they went in and put foam, some type of foam under it to raise and level out the building. And then they also had

to do some repairs and stuff like that on the ceiling. But it definitely was condemned and closed because of Sandy and the repairs that needed to happen to the building after the fact. I know there- there was a Salvation Army that also was affected by- by Sandy, that they're trying to refurbish now. And I think they got grant money for it, but it's coming in waves. And I know there's a lot of mold, a lot, asbestos. Asbestos, yeah. Yeah, it's a lotta that stuff going on in there. That was also affected, and it has been closed since Sandy.

Keaton: So is there any more efforts to try to open it back up? Like, or is that all your?

Collins: The Community Center? Well, the Community Center is finally, we are in its final stages. I actually walked in there the other day. It looks great. It's, I know they have to, it's been completely remodeled, new gym floor, which is in the hardwood floor which is great. I think right now it's two things we're waiting on, I think there's gonna be like a name, a renaming or a dedication. And then they need to put the basketball courts in. And I'm thinking that it's gonna be the end of this month that it could reopen, end of this might begin in the next month, which is gonna be huge for the community because now kids will be able to have somewhere to go. Especially during the winter months.

Grenagle: Excellent. I guess kind of speaking on like the youth in Crisfield, do you think that youth is going to kind of remain in Crisfield as far as like as they get older? Do you think they will also feel a commitment to the City of Crisfield or will they just wanna get out as soon as they can?

Collins: I think it depends on the mindset of- of their parents. I think that, like I said, Crisfield, some people can become complacent, you know, of Crisfield and- and be used to the things that Crisfield offers, used to ways of Crisfield. If you're fine with that, if you're fine with, you know, living in the housing authority. You know, and living in the way of that community, then you'll remain there, if your parents are. But if you're ambitious and, you know, you wanna find a job that, I don't know, pays six figures, or if you wanna found a job that, you know that kinda, I don't wanna say better living because there was a time when Crisfield was like a, you know, a place where most people wouldn't wanna leave. You know, crime was down, besides, you know, the norm. You know, people, they sell drugs and use drugs everywhere. They fight everywhere, but there weren't any murders, you know, stuff like that. There wasn't any gang violence or any gang activity, stuff that's kind of going on now. You know, I feel like- I feel like it's already at a place where the majority of the people that I grew up with, they've already left. You know, which is why there's a sense of when you go into for someone like me when you go into the housing authority, you know, in that neighborhood, you don't really see a lot of people that you know. You know or that's the reason why it only feels like home when someone passes away. You know what I mean? So, it's a hard question to ask, but I will- I will say it depends on the ambition of- of the person or the ambition of their parents.

Keaton: So, you mentioned the buildings being faulty or the locations of buildings being not where they're supposed to be. Do you think that is a common thing in the housing authority and anywhere that you have seen or? Can you just speak on the types of buildings?

Collins: I will say, I think the housing authority, and I'm only speaking of the housing authority's kind of like being built on where it's not supposed to be, and that's because that was kind of like a direct conversation I had with my supervisor, who was the executive director at the time of the housing authority. So he's privy to some of the, I guess, some of the- the knowledge and things that most people wouldn't likes know, you know? I would say I would say the flood has hurt some buildings, like businesses that were on Main Street. Because growing up, we had, I mean, we walked the Main Street, you had multiple stores in every building that's there, and now when you ride through, it's not much, you know, on Main Street. There was a pool hall there. There was kind of like a carry-out. You know, a fast-food restaurant there. There were shopping stores, there was an arcade, there was a video store to, you know, where you go rent movies. It was a lot to where that whole street was full of stores. Now when you go there, you see empty buildings, you know, that are kind of condemned now. The roofing is off or messed up. Buildings seem to be sinking or lopsided, you know. They're just sitting and being condemned; you know what I mean? So I think some of them, if I'm not mistaken, some people had apartments over top of those buildings. And I think they may have been, some people may have been forced to leave, you know, out of those, you know, buildings. So, I think. The flood has definitely done, you know, a lot of damage and I think it's unpredictable on what street is going to be flooded next, you know. So, it's hard to say what buildings should be where and when because, again, the complete landscape with Crisfield now on where- where the flood impacts has changed. You know, again, like I said, the street my mother lives on, that was a street that never- it never would flood. Now it's, you know, floods on the regular.

Grenagle: Does your mom ever think about relocating or is that ever a question for anyone you know?

Collins: She's not going anywhere. My mom- my mom won't even leave live out of Crisfield; you know. She's someone who, like my brother, I think they are people who are kind of complacent and comfortable with the way their life is, you know, like now. And when I say complacent, I don't mean it's a bad thing, you know. I just feel like people want; you have some people who want more. Like myself, you know, I grew accustomed to a certain lifestyle and a certain way of living when I left home at 17, you know. And then didn't come back until I was 30, you know. It's a person, someone who's been there their whole life, you know, it's kinda hard for them to pick up even to, you know, if I get this job in Salisbury. If they get a job or something, they probably still would live in Crisfield, you know? You know, I love Crisfield. Anybody tell you, man, you love Crisfield so much. I go to Crisfield every day. Versus you know someone like her. She's also like my mom, my brother it's- it's hard getting them to come

to my house and so I was ready for functions just because they, you know, they're used to what they're use to and there's a lot of people down there that are that way.

Keaton: When you left Crisfield to go to college, what college did you say you went to?

Collins: So, I played at University of Maryland, College Park.

Keaton: Talk about some of the big differences you noticed going from Crisfield to College Park.

Collins: I mean, well, first College Park, I mean that's the city, the college campus is the city so, you know, obviously coming from a small town, I don't think I was as, I guess, social as some of the people who come from a bigger area. You know, thankfully, I was a part of a basketball team, but I didn't have to go out and, you know, meet people on my own, you know, and we had a pretty high profile. You know, we won the National Championship and we, the year before we went to the Final Four, you know, so we were pretty popular, so people kind of gravitated to us, you know, so, but at the same time, you know, internally I could feel from a social aspect of me just walking in a room or walking in the cafeteria, for example. I wasn't gonna just go and meet and make friends, you know. So that's one of the things or just not having the same experiences, I guess. You know, again, you grow up in a small town, some of the things that you may say and do. I'll give you a perfect example. My freshman year, I was in the African-American's African American studies class, and we were talking about Asians. You know, the topic was Asians in the class. In front of the entire class, you know, we were, I can't remember like what the question was, but I remember saying Oriental. The professor, you know, didn't say I was wrong, but he called it out and said, you know, like, we say Asian, or, you know like refer to them as Asian now. And that's something that, coming from a small town where, number one, we didn't see, I didn't see, now it's different because you have a lot of Hispanics in Crisfield. You have, only a few Asian in Crisfield, the ones that, you know, live there and work at the Chinese place, but we didn't, I didn't experience Asians or, you know, anything like that, and in Crisfield it was Oriental, you know, an Oriental person, and that was my experience of it. So when you go outside and you're speaking off of only your experience, you know that's a- it's kind of like just not being kinda being ignorant to the rest of the world, you know what I mean?

Grenagle: Like I'd say like a clash of like culture or something maybe.

Collins: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because in Crisfield, it was only black and white, you know?

Grenagle: So, kind of, I guess, moving forward, do you have, like, hope for Crisfield and, like kind of where it's at now moving forward kind of with environmental impacts and if, like they're able to actually do anything that can stop that flooding, do think that it can rebound and become that booming hub that it once was that you remember it to be?

Collins: I think I've seen; I see some change. I think Mayor Taylor has- has done a good job of creating fresh ideas. I see events that are coming back that, you know, that used to be around when I was a kid. I think for Crisfield to fully recover, I think it's also is going to take a shift in mentality though. You know, I don't think it is just necessarily about the flood. I think it's about getting out of our own way. I think is about working more together. I think this is about instilling confidence in the community as a whole that, you know, everybody can play a part, you know, there instead of kind of like keeping it where the rich get richer, you know, the poor is going to stay like down. I think it's a matter of everyone working together. I think it's a matter of having fresher ideas. You know, and then obviously it's a matter of doing something for, you know, about the flood. I think if we could be in a position to offer more jobs to people in Crisfield, I think it's going to help the town tremendously because from a business standpoint, those winter months are brutal. You know, I think during the spring, summer, spring to beginning of fall, if you have a business down there, they're kind of safe because you still have tours that come in. But those winter months when it's just the town, it's hard to survive down there as a business because the people in the town can't afford to spend their money and support local businesses. So, what happens is local businesses tend to pack up and move away. If you're a food spot, most of the time you could kind of survive a little bit, but so I think it's a- it's a combination of things that is going to help the town of Crisfield and bring it back to where it once was as a booming place. We got to get outside of the- depending on the seafood industry, because the seafood industry is not what it used to be. At one point, Crisfield was the seafood capital of the world. We're far beyond that time and I think- I think a lot of people are still holding on to, you know, the seafood capital of the world or depending on Crisfield being the- the seafood being the end-all for Crisfield, gotta get out of that mindset. You walk around in Crisfield, I means, they put the crab on everything and it's kind of sad. Because everything is kind of like glorified, like anything that has to do with the crab is glorified. And this may come off as selfish, but I'm not saying that from a place of being selfish, I'm saying it from- from a place of inspiring, you know, kids that look like me, kids that grew up like me rather than be black or white or Hispanic. Those kids that grew in Somers Cove apartments are seeing far more than what I see, you know, I saw a lot but these kids are seeing murders, you know, like they're seeing all of that type of stuff they need to. The crab is not going to inspire them, what's going to inspire them is seeing someone that has come from that neighborhood and have done the things that I've done. Or seeing a college student, you know, someone who went to college and is now an architect or an engineer, you know, like those are the type of things that they need to see to understand, that it can be done from Crisfield. And then we need people to come back home, you know, that's, you know, we need those successful people to come back home, rather than it be they move back home or just visit more frequently to help the town.

Keaton: So, it seems like it's a- a bad loop here, starting from the flooding, makes businesses shut down, which gets rid of jobs, which so people can't get jobs and they're moving out, which means less people. It's just kind of like a negative loop here. You mentioned wanting to get away from the seafood industry. What other industries do you- do you think should be moving in?

Collins: So, there were times when Crisfield had like factories, you know, like, that- that had- that employed a lot of people. You know, like Sherwin Williams is, I want to say, the last factory job down there. And I know most of the people that are employed there are probably from Crisfield. You know, but we used to have like a Paul's Kitchen that we talked to hundreds of- of people in Crisfield. That's major. We're talking hundreds of people in Crisfield, even if it's just a hundred people. We are talking a hundred people that are employed that have a steady income that can support local businesses in town. That is going to go a long way, you know, so- so, I think that's, you know, that's- that's one of them. It's not necessarily that we have to move away from the seafood industry, but I think we have to start pumping, believing more in ideas, you know, and pushing out the, I mean, it's 2025. There's so many ways to make money now, you know? And I feel like we have to start pushing that mindset of entrepreneurial or of trades, you know, and that sort of thing, you know, instead of just saying, "Hey you graduate high school, you can always have a job working at the crab house." But that crab, what do you get paid for that? Like once you pay your bills or whatever it is you're doing, it's gone, you know. So, I think it goes back to that complacent, like just being complacent and following a system that- that's been in place for forever, you know. And though before it was, during the time it was booming, it could work because the seafood industry was booming and they could employ, you know, everyone. You know, but now, and we have multiple, like, seafood companies. Like, now it's so scarce that, you know, it's just- it's just it's not the way it used to be.

Grenagle: Ty, you got anything queued up? I guess just maybe like two points. Like what would you like people to hear about Crisfield? Just because this is gonna be archived and public access for Salisbury University and anybody who can access it. So, like what would you like people to know about Crisfield that they don't typically know? And like what maybe advice would you have for Crisfieldian's or future generation?

Collins: I would say advice, because I think that's an easier question. Advice would be to get out and experience the world. Get out, experience the world, come back home, do your part. To inspire the generations after us, to inspire the youth who is going to play a major part of the evolving the town of Crisfield after we're gone, or evolving the part of Crisfield after we've done our part. And I would say, something to know about Crisfield, cause we're bigger than the seafood, you know? And we need your help. I mean, just being frank, just being honest, like, we need you help, we need your support. It's not the- it's not the place that- it's not- it's not the place that the now current reputation has kind of presented it to be, you know. Because now I think any bad thing that happens in a small town is always kind of magnified times ten versus what would happen in a city. Happens in the city, you might not even know about it, you might not hear about it. It's something that happened in Crisfield. For murder happening in Crisfield, it's, you know, the community is going to feel it and everyone is going to know about it for a long time, you know. There's a lot of positive things going on in Crisfield, you know. Like I said, we're just going to need the support, you know. But it's far more than just the- the seafood, you know, part of the town.

Grenagle: And you mentioned support, and I think this will be like the last question. Support, you mentioned that people coming back with their experience and helping evolve Crisfield. Is there anything other like other types of support that you also have in mind that Crisfield could use that would be?

Collins: I mean, it could use grants, it can use things to help with being proactive about the flooding. It could help, it could be things people come in and help getting grants for programs, such as, you know, the type of work that I do. It could be people getting more involved, you know. Honestly, I feel like Crisfield isn't a bad place, you know, I just feel like it needs some attention, you know, need some car. It needs people that care for the town to be able to come together and help and I really honestly believe that Crisfield is behind right now because we get in our own way, you know, from the political standpoint. Someone like myself, I know everybody, I- I- the former mayor- mayor I was cool with, Ms. Taylor I'm cool with. I had to work hand in hand with both. The former mayor used to come and watch my games and always supported me when I was in college. The current mayor comes from the town- the area of town that I'm from, you know, and sometimes you can, which I did actually, kind of got pulled into a political battle, you know, and the town of Crisfield tends to get in its own way. You know, it's kind of like a- and we're too small to have an A side or a B side. You know, we all got to be Crisfield, you know. That's also some advice that I would give from outside like looking at like I'm- I can't vote in Crisfield. I can have some say and do things. You know, I try, like I said, I try to be as involved as possible. You know, what I'm on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce, do events in the City of Crisfield, work for the housing authority, you know. Man, we just need more people with that type of mindset to actually care about the town, and that is willing to, basically, not tear one organization or one person down to shine, you know, we need everybody to come together and help- help the town. To me that's the only way, you know, because it's affecting everything, all the way down to youth sports, you know, it affects everyone.

Grenagle: Andre, thank you so much for your time.

Collins: No problem, I appreciate you guys, yeah. No problem.

[Transcript ends]